

Remarks

Claims 1-3, 8, 9, 18-22, 27, 28, 34, 40, 42-45, 47-49, and 51 are presently pending. Claim 51 has been added by this amendment. Claims 4-7, 10-17, 23-26, 29-33, 35-39, 41, 46, and 50 have been withdrawn from consideration.

Reconsideration and re-examination of the application as amended is respectfully requested.

Claims 1 and 40 have been amended. Applicant submits that the presently pending claims are novel and non-obvious and respectfully requests a Notice of Allowance.

Claim 1 has been amended to require at least one of the arms has unrestricted motion control independent of the others; and also that the drive system commonly controlling the robotic arms defines a central axis about which the robotic arms rotate. Applicant submits that claim 1 as presently pending is not taught or suggested by the references cited in the previous Office Action, and in any event, that the cited references are not properly combinable, for the reasons set forth in Applicant's previous Amendment and Response, dated May 19, 2003.

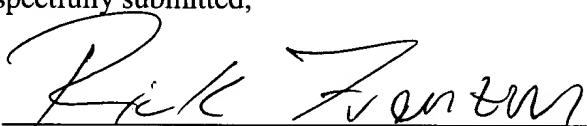
Claims 2-3, 8, 9, 18-22, 27, 28, 34, and 51 depend from and further limit independent claim 1. For at least the same reasons, claims 2-3, 8, 9, 18-22, 27, 28, 34, and 51 are not taught or suggest.

Claim 40 has been amended to require that the arms remain evenly spaced and at identical radial distances when the arms are coupled or at least one of the arms has unrestricted motion control independent of the other when the arms are decoupled. Applicant submits that claim 40 as presently pending is not taught or suggested by the references cited in the previous Office Action, and in any event, that the cited references are not properly combinable, for the reasons set forth in Applicant's previous Amendment and Response, dated May 19, 2003. Claims 42-45, and 47-49 depend from and further limit independent claim 40. For at least the same reasons, claims 42-45, and 47-49 are not taught or suggest.

CONCLUSION

Claims 1-3, 8, 9, 18-22, 27, 28, 34, 40, 42-45, 47-49, and 51 are pending. In light of Applicants' response, Applicants believe the pending claims are in condition for allowance and respectfully request the Examiner issue a Notice of Allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

By: 
Rick L. Franzen, Reg. No.: 51,702
Telephone No.:

October 31, 2003

Date

Office of Intellectual Property Counsel
3M Innovative Properties Company
Facsimile No.: 651-736-3833